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U. S. Department of Agriculture

1945--OTWELL IRIS FIELDS--1946

CARLINVILLE, ILLINOIS



This flower-surrounded home has been visited yearly by many thousands of flower-lovers. It was built by the late Will B. Otwell, who founded the Otwell Iris Fields and who for many years was a successful nurseryman and horticulturist. The home is still occupied by his wife, Winifred B. Otwell, who is continuing with the work.

The iris growing began as a simple experiment to beautify some vacant town lots. The result was so gratifying that the plants were transferred to their present place, where the work of developing and perfecting them has continued through twenty years, until today Otwell iris are grown in gardens in every state in the Union.

Whether "people make the place" or "the place makes people" is debatable. Life weaves its pattern so intricately about both, that we seem a part of our abode, and cannot be content elsewhere. This flowered spot, for me, is home—away from it spells homesickness.

It is encouraging to know that the love of the beautiful still lives in the hearts of people in a war torn and intensely practical age. I would share these acres of beauty with you—they would not be half so beautiful to me without your presence and enthusiasm—so I am hoping to greet you personally when you come in May. But if a visit is not possible for all this year, I shall look forward to meeting you through the pages of this little folder, to share with you the loveliness of our realm of beauty which is the rich product of the soil and soul.

Mrs. W. B. Otwell

A SPIRIT FLOWER

My heart was frozen—even as the earth
That covered thee forever from my sight
All thoughts of happiness expired at birth
Within me naught but black and starless night.

Down through the winter sunshine snowflakes came
All shimmering, like to silver butterflies
They seemed to whisper softly thy dear name
They melted with the tear drops from mine eyes.

Then suddenly there bloomed within that hour
In my poor heart so seeming dead—a flower
Whose fragrance in my life shall ever be
The tender, sacred memory of thee.

—Stanton

WILL B. OTWELL

To you, our many valued friends who do not know that my husband, Will B. Otwell, has passed away, I bring this message.

His earthly work of cultivating flowers and trees is over, but in that beautiful country of the soul where he has gone, there are spiritual flowers of great beauty and I am sure he is tending there, blossoms even lovelier than the ones he tended here. These earthly flowers will bloom again and welcome Spring but he who planted them will not be here to greet you this year.

Because he cared for you too and realized great happiness in his countless friends, often expressing himself as owing you, both his seen and unseen friends, an enormous debt of gratitude for your priceless friendship through the years, I would tell you more about him.



His life was like a prayer and that prayer was to be good and to do good. No one knew better than he the fine art of unselfishness. He was honorable, sensible, unassuming and undemanding—the product of fine living. He builded his character of the finest materials, knowing that nothing grows unless it is touched by the Infinite. He met life with a zest unbounded and it was his constant desire to do something worthwhile for those about him. In the growing of flowers as in many other things he willed that those flowers should bring happiness to others.

And in that last hour he was unafraid because he had lived his faith in God and now he has gone to tend flowers in the sweet fields of Eden. For his sake and for the sake of the work he loved so well I shall continue this work of love and beauty he endeavored to bring into your lives.

Mrs. W. B. Otwell

A FEW WORDS ABOUT IRIS

Dare to test this statement for yourself. John Wister once said, "If you pick an iris of blended coloring and hold it up in the evening twilight against the sky, you become a slave of the iris forever." Pick a single stalk of Red Radiance or Rameses and really study and enjoy it for a moment and you will find that new and undreamed vistas of peace and beauty will open to you.

The iris is the most original and distinct flower of the temperate zone. It is the flower of individuality. It increases readily and flowers generously and adapts itself to its surroundings.

In the iris Hall of Fame are such truly magnificent flowers as Cook's E. B. Williamson, Mitchell's Naranja, Kirkland's Junaluska, Grinter's Ella Winchester, and many, many others. Thanks to skillful hybridizers the finest aristocrats of iridescence are available to everyone for less than the price of a new show or a good book.

As a landscape flower, the iris is unsurpassed. Its unlimited color range and the varying height to which the different bloom stalks grow, allow it to lend itself well to all garden and general landscaping arrangements.

There is little danger of wrong color combinations in iris plantings, providing enough lighter iris, as yellow, white or ivory shades are included to give sufficient contrast to the darker and more brilliant shades. It is more important to plant with the matured height of the flower in mind and its setting or background, than to plant according to color scheme, unless an all blue or an all gold garden or the like is desired. Colors often arrange themselves better than hours devoted to this purpose can achieve. Green lawns, green trees, evergreen trees, a dark row of tree trunks, a dark wall or foundation makes a good foil for iris plantings. Mass planting of the same color make a fine showing. Fewer plants of many kinds placed in one bed are more dependent upon their background for proper display. The green foliage of some iris continue after the blooming season to furnish beauty to driveways, hill-side or erosion plantings.

As a cut flower, the iris has also great possibilities. In arranging large jars full, use the full length stem and put one flower in at a time. Do not overcrowd as you will lose the charm and symmetry of each flower stalk. Bouquets should be made of one color or of flowers of the same intensity of color rather than of great contrast. Iris may be arranged for table use. Do not mutilate the stem, use rather table iris or short border type iris for this purpose. If these are too tall, remove a few buds and float them in a shallow bowl which has enough surface to display the bud or buds when they are open. Cut a few tips of leaves to complete this arrangement. No matter what arrangement you wish to use, always cut your flowers in the morning and allow to remain out of water for an hour or so before use. This makes them easier to handle, as they are less brittle. Always pick off curled buds, giving the fresh buds a better chance to open. In selecting flowers to cut, choose those with a generous supply of buds.

Anything which grows is more beautiful to look at than anything which is built. Flowers, of all growing things in Nature, touch the heart most profoundly. Few realize the improvements made in iris growing in the last decade, both as to size and color. Present day iris really bear only a slight resemblance, by way of comparison, to the older types irises. Your valuable garden space should be saved for some of these newer, finer sorts. When you re-set your old iris, do not feel that you have done your neighbor a favor when you hand him iris such as were grown in your great grandfather's time. Certain old varieties never lose their charm, but the truly magnificent improved iris of this day are superior in every way.

Iris deserves more extensive cultivation. We need beauty in a wartorn and ugly world, we need flowers as well as food and we need flowers that take the minimum of cultivation and care. Flowers are scarce now for many reasons. Iris, too, will be hard to obtain. Order a few of these fine flowers now if you want to avoid disappointment in securing some of the most attractive kinds that grow.

POPULAR IRIS VARIETIES

All-u-we—A new type of variegata. Standards are yellow suffused with bronze red. Falls, long and ruddy shading into gold. 35c.

Aphrodite—One of the loveliest pink irises in our entire list. 35c.

Blue Velvet—An intense, deep, rich pansy blue self. 35c.

Burning Bronze—A large imposing flower in red tones. Standards light red. Falls are a coppery red. 40c.

California Gold—Fine deep yellow iris. A superb flower. 40c.

Caprice—A beautiful border iris. Magenta red and unusually fragrant. 35c.

Cheorio—A brilliant red bi-color. 40c.

Copper Luster—Iridescent copper color. Very fine. \$1.00.

Coronation—A fine rich gold iris. Fragrant. Pleases everyone. 25c.

Crimson King—A dark claret purple, almost black. 25c.

Crown Jewel—A fine new introduction. Burnt orange effect. 40c.

Crystal Beauty—Tall, large and pure white. Unequalled in size and texture. 35c.

Dauntless—A fine large red iris. Single plants sold for \$35 just a few years ago. 35c.

Depute Nombot—A giant claret crimson iris with bronze overlay. Extraordinarily beautiful. 35c.

Dogrose—A tall pink self, the blooms exquisite in texture and color. 35c.

Dore—A yellow and cream bi-color. Very unusual and attractive. 25c.

E. B. Williamson—A glowing coppery coppery red. Lustrous finish. A most magnificent iris. Rare. \$1.50.

Elkhart—A fine new chesnut red iris. Large and strong and very beautiful. 50c.

Ella Winchester—A large mahogany red iris. Medium height and blooms very freely. 50c.

Eros—A beautiful salmon pink self. Absolutely different. Fragrant. 40c.

Ethelwyn Durbar—The largest and finest pink iris ever produced. Blooms freely. Large, well shaped flower. 40c.

Ethel Peckham—A fine brilliant red iris. Large flowers. Fragrant. 50c.

Folkwang—A truly different iris. Lilac tinged standards and true iris pink falls. Long blooming season. Fragrant. 35c.

Fragonard—Soft, lustrous old rose. 40c.

Frieda Mohr—Standards a lilac pink, falls a lilac rose. 35c.

George J. Tribolet—Dark red purple, almost black. 25c.

Golden Bow—Long, large flowers of chrome yellow. Very early and fragrant. 35c.

Golden Flare—An unusually attractive blending of Talisman rose shades with a faint blue flush on the falls. 35c.

Golden Glow—A rich yellow self. Blooms freely. 25c.

Grace Sturtevant—A rich brown red and carmine iris. 40c.

Gudrun—A very large pure white iris. Blooms well balanced as to standards and falls. Medium height. Early. 40c.

Happy Days—A deep yellow self. Huge compact flowers. 50c.

Hernani—A deep garnet red iris. Medium height. Similar to Red Radiance. 35c.

Indian Chief—An outstanding red bi-color. Standards are fawn color, falls a brilliant red. 25c.

Jean Cayeaux—Unlike any other iris shade. Cafe au lait color. This soft brown self is most attractive. 40c.

Jerry—A brilliant red iris. 50c.

Joyance—A Dykes medal winner. A huge ivory tone flower with gold veining at the throat. Flowers have excellent form and are well balanced on the stem. 40c.

Junaluska—Given the Award of Merit by the American Iris Society. The standards are rose with a golden blend. The falls are a vivid velvety carmine. The flowers are large, of heavy substance and perfectly formed. 75c.

Lighthouse—A brilliant flame colored flower with rose falls. Extremely beautiful and unusual. \$1.00.

Lilamani—Large velvety blackish self. Very attractive. 50c.

Lord of June—A large blue self. Tall. 35c.

Madame Gaudicheau—A rich pansy blue self. One of the best growers and heaviest flowering iris in the list. 25c.

Marco Polo—Standards are a lustrous rose. Falls are crimson. 40c.

Miss California—A stately pink iris. 60c.

Morning Splendor—Large, tall, fragrant raisin red iris. 35c.

Mrs. Marion Cran—A tall and lovely ruffled pink iris. 35c.

Naranja—A beautiful gold iris with burnt orange overlay. Rich and colorful. 40c.

Otwell's Sky Blue—A beautiful heavenly blue iris. Tall, strong and fragrant. Long blooming season. 25c.

Pioneer—A brilliant red-purple flower —nothing more showy or brilliant in the list. 25c.

POPULAR IRIS VARIETIES

Pluie d'or—A fine deep gold self. Excellent to use with bouquets of pastel shades. 35c.

Rameses—Winner of the Dykes medal. A rich blend of pink and bronze. A desirable flower in every way. 35c.

Rebellion—A magnificent iris. A deep glowing blood red. \$1.50.

Red Dominion—A fine rich all-red iris. General effect very dark. Medium height. 35c.

Rheingauperle—An exquisite iris of apple blossom pink. It has the fragrance of white clover. Excellent for border planting. 35c.

Rhein Nixe—An old time favorite. Standards are white, falls are purple. 25c.

Rob Roy—A rich red iris equal to Dauntless and preferred by many. 35c.

Ronda—A good red iris. A little like Rubeo in color. 35c.

Rose Dominion—A beautiful American Beauty Rose color. Flaring falls. 35c.

Ruby Perry—A light cerise pink self. Tall and exquisitely beautiful. 25c.

Sacramento—A giant plicata. White, feather stitched in magenta. 25c.

Selene—A large silvery white iris with frilled standards. 35c.

Seminole—Rich velvety crimson. Good border iris. 25c.

Sha Jehan—Standards are a soft creamy buff. Falls are a rich plum velvet bordered with white. 50c.

Shiwassee—Large and early red iris. 25c.

Sir Launcelot—Standards are a soft fawn, falls a brownish claret. 40c.

Suntan—Yellow with bronze overlay. An interesting flower. 35c.

The Black Douglas—A rich black-purple self. 40c.

Trails End—Bittersweet red. Standards a beautiful blend. 35c.

True Charm—A charming plicata—white featherstitched with blue. 25c.

True Delight—A white iris with bright pink edges in feather stitching. 35c.

Varese—A large bronze red iris. Distinctive and beautiful. 35c.

War Eagle—Old rose standards and carmine colored falls. 35c.

Zilia—An old fashioned iris. Tall, strong beautiful blue self. 25c.

Zuni—Rich glowing red brown iris, suffused with copper. Medium height. 40c.

IRIS DAY

It is Iris Day, and the Iris Fields
Are like a lovely dream.
A myriad hues glow softly there;
Quite magical they seem.

As if the good brown earth had caught
The colors of every sky,
To give them back to the world to-day
In the gorgeous blooms held high.

Here is a field like the sunset gold
Of a bright day taking leave,
And here is one like a purple cloud
In the western sky at eve.

Here's one like the blush of a dewy dawn,
And one of heaven's own blue,
There's one like a fleecy cumulus
When the sky shows faintly through.

And yonder in the far-flung field
The rainbow colors clear
Delight the multitudes who make
The pilgrimage each year.

Who linger long, then reluctantly
From the glowing fields retire
With the memory of that loveliness
To cheer them and inspire.

—Margaret K. Fraser, Carlinville, Illinois

IRIS CULTIVATION

Iris can be planted anytime that the ground isn't frozen, preferably, however, from mid-summer to late fall—just so they root well before freezing weather. Set the rhizomes ten to twenty inches apart, depending on the amount of room that you have and be sure that they are planted—not too deep but planted with roots spread and tops cut off fan-wise. Firm each plant by stepping on each side of it, to tighten it in the ground, after a small amount of dirt has been thrown toward the plant with a hand plow. It is advisable to soak the rhizomes a few moments before planting as shipments must be packed dry to reach you in good condition. Rhizomes may also be watered after planting until the roots are well established and new growth appears above the original fans. This growth may take about thirty days, depending upon the season and the variety of iris planted. Never allow water to stand on the iris as iris do not like wet feet. The other great enemy of iris is bluegrass. Give shallow cultivation for grass and weeds before either reach any size.

Iris will grow in any soil. Mix the soil with some sand for drainage. Fertilizers are not especially needed except when making an entire new flower bed. Then work in one part sand, one part well-rotted manure and one part wood or coal ashes. For the best results re-set your plant oftener—every three to four years anyway.

Mulch new set iris with corn fodder or straw in the late fall. Place a few shovels full of dirt on the mulch at intervals to keep it from blowing off in the winter time. Mulching protects new set plants from root breakage due to freezing and thawing. The iris tops form a natural mulch for the older plants and unless your plants are diseased should remain on until the following Spring when they may be removed by hand or by raking them off. It is advisable, however, to cut off all bloom stalks, with knife or sickle just after the blooming season. This allows the growing strength of the flower to go to the rhizome instead of to the seed pod which forms just below the flower. The rhizomes produce, of course, the same flower, while the seed, if allowed to develop, produces another flower altogether.

If the season is wet and drainage poor you may encounter iris rot. Re-set the rhizomes after scraping off the rot and sunning them for a few days. They may also be dipped in powdered sulphur before re-planting.

Remember, too, that not all varieties of iris have the same sized rhizomes or do they grow just alike. All iris should bloom the first year after planting but this is determined by the variety and conditions under which they are grown.

Mrs. W. B. Otwell



ONE OF OUR FIELDS IN FULL BLOOM

WHAT OUR FRIENDS SAY

The iris I received from you are lovely and every one admires them so much.
—Mitchell, South Dakota.

I have just moved down here and miss my iris I had from you back home in Illinois, so I am going to start a new selection from your fields and hope they please me as much as did the others.—Deland, Florida.

My iris in bloom last Memorial Day made a simply terrific show. Red Dominion, E. B. Williamson and Ella Winchester were outstandingly good. Perhaps the most interesting and unusual were Naranja and The Black Douglas.—Tinicum, Pennsylvania.

My neighbor bought some iris from you and they were so much finer than any I had. Wish I had known of yours sooner. I am sending an order today.—Allegany, Oregon.

I passed my catalog on to a friend who ordered some roots and she is more than pleased with them.—Cranford, New Jersey.

Two years ago I gave you an order for iris and never have I possessed such iris. They were gorgeous beyond anything in my section of Kentucky. Happy Days was wonderful. I placed a stalk of it in our store. It had blooms the size of a breakfast plate. It was admired immensely.—Taylorsville, Ky.

The iris I received from you last year grew so well and when they bloomed this spring they were superbly beautiful. It was hard for me to decide which one was the prettiest. They all did better than I thought possible for the first year. Thank you for "making me a slave to the iris."—Salem, Missouri.

Every iris I purchased from the Otwell Iris fields bloomed this Spring. My flower garden is across from the kitchen window and even the dreaded dish-washing has become a more desirable task, because of the beauty of my iris in sight.—Oak Hill, West Virginia.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

In this small folder there is not one variety of iris listed that we have not grown and tested for its health, beauty and adaptability before offering it to you. We do not sell new and untried kinds of iris. There is no better way to part with your money in a hurry and in most cases experience disappointment. Novelties at \$50 per plant may not be as satisfactory as new varieties at 50 cents per plant which have been grown long enough by experienced growers to really prove their worth.

We grow no flowers but iris but grow them by the thousands. We specialize particularly in red and pink iris. We ship only the finest and best developed stock which is sure to please you. In order to do this we re-set our plants much oftener than formerly to insure fine individual rhizomes for you.

For real iris beauty plant fewer kinds and more of each kind if you wish to make the best showing. Add one or two of several extra kinds each year to your orders. Plant them in a trial flower bed and watch them. Perhaps you will want a supply of them the following year. This method of choosing is far more satisfactory than buying from colored pictures in a catalog. I have never seen any color reproduction of iris that was true to the real flower.

Look over our list and see if some of our iris do not meet your requirements. Each iris you receive will be labelled and true to name. To save time, correspondence and possible disappointment enclose a list of second choices of iris when ordering, in case some of your particular selections are no longer available. All orders are filled in the order in which they are received. All orders will be shipped to you post paid at prices quoted in this catalog. Prices quoted in other catalogs are not effective. No special collections will be available this year due to the great demand for iris. No orders for less than one dollar will be accepted if packing and shipping are required. No C.O.D. orders will be accepted at all. Our responsibility ceases on delivery of your order in good condition to the Post Office.

Please send cash with your order, either a post office money order or your personal check will be acceptable. If it is the shipping season I will not acknowledge your order by letter but will send your shipment to you at the first opportunity. If there should be a few days' delay—be patient—don't write. Remember, there are serious labor shortages and it may have rained here, thus hindering digging operations slightly. All shipments are dug to order and not ahead of time. Order any time you wish and your shipment will be sent to you at the best time for planting. July to November are good planting months. We will make no shipments until after the blooming season. Shipping generally begins about July 1.

Please write us your full name and address with care. Remember, we do not know your pet abbreviations for towns and states. If you cannot write plainly, please print. We must have your complete address and zone number if your city has one, for our mailing lists. The greatly increased volume of mail passing through the U. S. Post Office and the perishable nature of these shipments, make it absolutely necessary that you give us your full address. We ship gift orders, postpaid, anywhere in the United States. Please enclose your personal gift card to include in these orders.

We take this opportunity to thank you for your friendship and patronage through the years. We are constantly endeavoring to improve the quality and variety of our iris and hope that you can continue to find flowers that meet your needs. Sincerely,

MRS. W. B. OTWELL

MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN IRIS SOCIETY